UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
5th meeting
held on
Monday, 26 October 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE RELEVANT ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

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Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.5
29 October 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

92-57222 6106S (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE RELEVANT ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it that the Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly should include the item entitled "Question of the composition of the relevant organs of the United Nations" in the provisional agenda of its forty-eighth session.

2. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/47/20, A/47/383)

3. The CHAIRMAN said that in 1989 the General Assembly had endorsed the initiative of the international scientific community and the recommendation of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) by designating 1992 as International Space Year. With the theme "Mission to Planet Earth", a main focus of the Year had been on the promotion of international cooperation in space technology, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries, and on the use of ever-advancing space technology to protect the Earth. COPUOS and its two subcommittees had continued to work assiduously to fulfil the mandate they had received from the General Assembly more than 30 years before, compiling an impressive collection of international space law. Another instrument of international law could now be added, since COPUOS had at its June 1992 session adopted a complete set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space and had recommended their adoption at the current session of the General Assembly.

4. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria), speaking as Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and introducing the report of the Committee on the work of its thirty-fifth session (A/47/20), said that after years of negotiations COPUOS had reached consensus on a set of principles for the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Six years after the adoption of the Principles relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space, the Committee could be proud of having reached agreement on another set of important principles that promoted international cooperation in space.

5. As in previous years, the work of the Committee had covered ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes; the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its twenty-ninth session, including the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), contained in document A/AC.105/513; the report of the Legal Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-first session, contained in document A/AC.105/514; and a review of the current status of spinoff benefits of space technology.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

6. The Committee had considered as a matter of priority the agenda item "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes" and had agreed that a good way to broaden and deepen international cooperation in outer space was through international and regional programmes undertaken as part of universal endeavours such as International Space Year. In considering the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its twenty-ninth session and the implementation of recommendations of UNISPACE 82, the Committee had dealt with such important matters as the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system, remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, and the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The Working Group of the Whole had concluded that many of the recommendations had still not been fully implemented and had made several recommendations in its report (A/AC.105/513, annex II). The Committee had recommended that the Working Group should be reconvened the following year.

7. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee was concerned at the "meagre and inadequate" financial resources available for the Programme on Space Application and had requested the General Assembly to make an adequate allocation for the Programme in order to fully implement the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. The Programme would nevertheless continue apace in 1993 in organizing workshops, training courses and seminars. Progress had been made with regard to the proposal for the establishment of regional centres for space science and technology education. With reference to a possible follow-up to UNISPACE 82, the Committee had noted a proposal for a third UNISPACE conference to be organized in 1995, preferably in a developing country, and had recommended that at its forthcoming sessions Member States might discuss the possibility of holding the conference.

8. On the question of remote sensing of the Earth by satellite, the Committee had recognized the importance of continuing international efforts to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of remote-sensing systems and to promote cooperation in that area through regular meetings between satellite operators, ground station operators and users. The Committee had urged countries and agencies to continue the free distribution of meteorological information, a practice that had been recognized as an example of international cooperation.

9. With regard to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, the Committee had taken note of the report of the Working Group (A/AC.105/513, annex III) and had endorsed the recommendations of the Subcommittee that Member States should be invited to report regularly to the Secretary-General on national and international research into the safety of nuclear-powered satellites, that further studies should be conducted on the problem of the collision of nuclear power sources with space debris and that the Subcommittee should be kept informed on the results of such studies. The Committee had recommended as well that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should reconvene its Working Group and continue consideration of the item the

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

following year. Other items receiving the Subcommittee's and the Committee's attention had included space transportation systems; examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit; matters relating to life sciences, including space medicine; progress in the geosphere-biosphere (global change) programme; and matters relating to planetary exploration and to astronomy. It had recommended that those items should be retained on the Subcommittee's agenda.

10. The theme recommended for special attention at the 1993 session of the Subcommittee was "Space-based communication: the expansion of current services and increased understanding of new systems and the services they will make possible". The Committee had also endorsed the Subcommittee's recommendation that, as in past years, the Committee on Space Research and the International Aeronautical Federation should be invited to arrange a symposium on that theme in liaison with Member States. The Committee had taken note of the various national and international programmes already undertaken or planned as part of the International Space Year, in particular the programme for the World Space Congress held in Washington, D.C., and had recommended that the United Nations should actively encourage the continuation of activities initiated for the Year and the involvement of more nations in them. In the light of the recently concluded United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the work of the Committee regarding the Earth and environment became even more pertinent. The Committee had requested the Secretariat to prepare for its next session an analytical report on the role that the Committee could play in view of the decisions and recommendations of the Conference and had invited Member States to submit their views on the matter.

11. The Committee had noted that the General Assembly in resolution 46/45 had judged space debris to be an appropriate subject for future discussion by the Committee.

12. The Legal Subcommittee had re-established its Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, which had laid the groundwork for the successful outcome of the Committee's decisions on that matter. It was now up to the General Assembly to adopt the principles on which the Committee had reached consensus. He hoped that the General Assembly would bring to a successful conclusion what had taken the Committee 13 years to agree on. The Committee had recommended that the question of early review and possible revision of the principles should be considered by the Legal Subcommittee through its Working Group. Little progress had been made on the definition and delimitation of outer space or on the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit. Nevertheless, the Committee had taken note of a working paper on questions concerning the legal regime of aerospace objects and had been able to agree that the approach suggested in the paper was positive and could form the basis for future discussions.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

13. The Legal Subcommittee's Working Group to consider the legal aspects related to the application of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all States, taking into particular account the needs of the developing countries, had met for the second time and had held very extensive discussions on the basis of a working paper proposing principles for international cooperation in the exploration and utilization of outer space for peaceful uses (A/AC.105/C.2/L.182).

14. Finally, in reviewing the current status of spin-off benefits of space technology, the Committee had agreed that such spin-offs were yielding substantial benefits in many fields and had recommended that the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should consider including promotion of the subject in at least one of its meetings and that at least a small portion of space agencies' budgets should be allocated to promotion of spin-off benefits in various countries.

15. In future, in the light of the changing political situation, the Committee could play an important role in many areas. Space technology was, for instance, offering a unique tool for monitoring the Earth's environment. The Committee could promote the peaceful use of space systems originally developed for military use, including remote-sensing applications, to support international peacemaking and peace-building activities.

16. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that the set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space had been rightly heralded as the most significant since the adoption of the Principles relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Space in 1986. That should be seen as inspiration and as showing that progress could be made with diligent effort and a spirit of compromise. The adoption of the principles might mean a lighter workload for a time, and he hoped that other items on the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee would benefit. Questions relating to the Earth and space environment were of increasing importance, and it had long been Austria's view that COPUOS should deal with them. The anonymous recommendation in the Committee's report that the Secretary-General should prepare an analytical report on the potential role of COPUOS in view of the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was in that regard encouraging.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.